



# Moving FORWARD IN THE Health SECTOR...

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Consultative Committees for English- and French-Speaking Minority Communities

STATUS REPORT OCTOBER 2005



Canada

# Ensuring equal access to health care for all Canadians.

Communication in the client's own official language is essential for quality in health care services. When patients cannot communicate with their health care providers in their own language, the quality of services offered is compromised. This language barrier may also mean that individuals use preventive health care less often and this may eventually increase physician consultation time and the number of diagnostic tests required. In addition, the potential for errors in diagnosis is greater.

As part of the Government of Canada's aim to promote the development of official language minority communities, Health Canada established the Consultative Committee for English-Speaking Minority Communities and the Consultative Committee for French-Speaking Minority Communities. Their role is to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister on how to improve access to health and social services in the patient's primary official language.



In their respective reports to the Minister of Health in 2001 and 2002, the committees recommended strategies aimed at filling gaps in access to health services, and controlling the isolation of professionals in minority official language situations and difficulties in coordinating access to English- and French-language services. To meet these challenges, the committees highlighted three priority areas for action:

- community networking;
- training, recruitment and retention of health professionals; and,
- primary health care initiatives.

# Building community networks.

The committees proposed a cooperative approach inspired by the model put forward by the World Health Organization (WHO) entitled "Towards Unity for Health". This vision favors the involvement of all partners, including health professionals and managers of health institutions, community and academic organizations and government representatives. Community networking and involvement is the key focus of the proposed approach.

In its March 2003 *Action Plan for Official Languages*, the Government of Canada re-emphasized its commitment to investing in health sector initiatives to better address certain priorities of official language minority communities. \$26.7 million was allocated to improve access to health care services for English-speaking minority communities. And \$92.3 million was allocated to support such measures for French-speaking minority communities.

At mid-term, this status report highlights achievements made to date in the implementation of this plan. It highlights the major steps taken, draws attention to certain difficulties that have been encountered and identifies elements that require special attention.

## **Networking – \$4.7 million (Anglophones) and \$10 million (Francophones) over five years**

In the last two years, 28 networks were created to ensure more equitable access to health care services by mobilizing institutional and community capacities. These networks contribute to overcoming the isolated nature of English minority communities in Quebec and French minority communities in other Canadian provinces and territories.

# Achievements

Anglophone minority communities

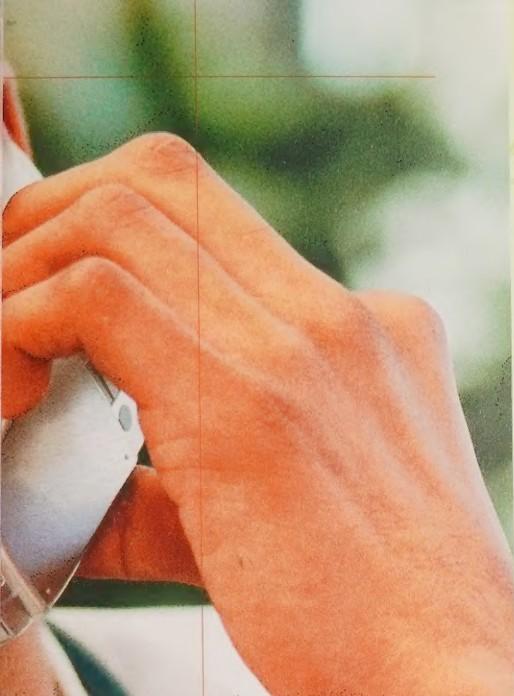
- The Consultative Committee for English-Speaking Minority Communities designated the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) to coordinate a funding initiative to build networks of community and institutional stakeholders for English-speaking communities.
- The Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) comprises 59 community organizations and public institutions across Quebec dedicated to promoting projects and partnerships to improve the vitality of the communities that they serve. The CHSSN has been designated to provide support to eight organizations tasked with building capacity in the province's health and social services system.
- The CHSSN and the nine organizations are working together to build partnerships with both regional planning authorities and service providers. They met in November 2004 to assess community needs and develop strategies to build durable links with the public health and social service system.
- The Townshippers' Association launched a regional pilot project in the Estrie region. Community and institutional stakeholders are consulted on needs and priorities, and steps are being taken to set up formal partnerships between them.
- The Townshippers' Association has also worked in the Montérégie region to support the development of a network to improve access to services for the dispersed English-speaking population in Haute-Yamaska and Brome-Missisquoi.
- The Megantic English-Speaking Community Development Corporation has organized a network of community and service providers to offer services to Anglophones in Chaudière-Appalaches region.
- The Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders has organized its network to act on the needs identified by the English speakers in eastern Quebec.
- The Coasters' Association has contacted partners to establish a network to better serve the English-speaking communities along the Lower North Shore.
- In Gaspé, Vision Gaspé Percé Now and the Committee for Anglophone Social Action are developing partnerships with public health and social services to improve access to services for Anglophone senior citizens in the region.
- The Fraser Recovery Program in Quebec has set up a network of organizations and resources to address the problem of the growing number of English-speaking youth with drug and alcohol addictions.

- The Regional Association of West Quebecers has worked to meet the mixed needs of 30,000 English speakers in Gatineau and to reduce the isolation of 20,000 others who live in the large rural areas of the Outaouais region.
- Catholic Community Services is establishing a local network of medical facilities, health and social services institutions and different community resources serving the English-speaking communities of Montreal's East Island.

### Francophone minority communities

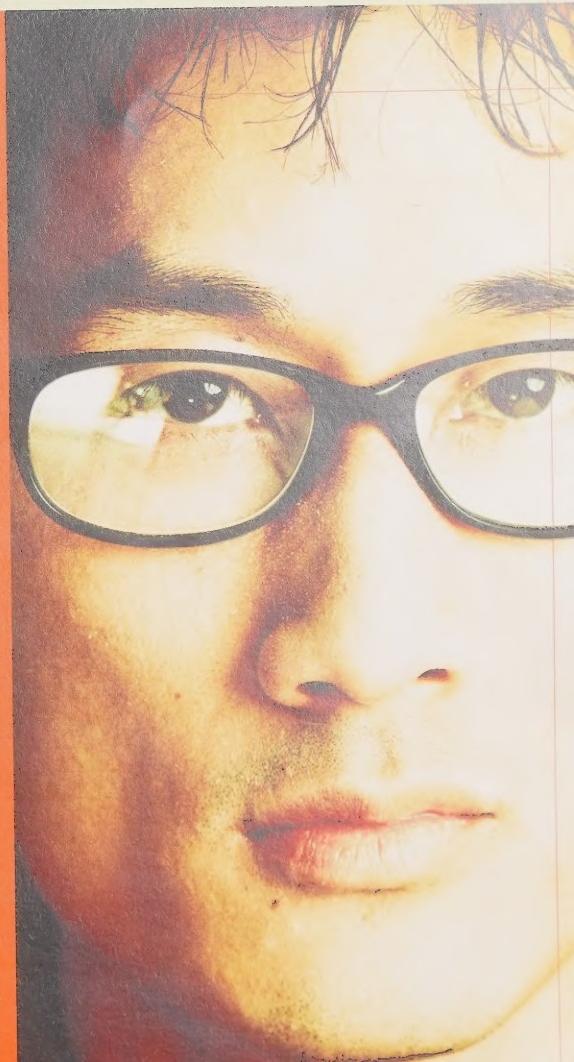
- The Consultative Committee for French-Speaking Minority Communities, with partners from health fields and community representatives, viewed the creation of Société *Santé en français* as a way to coordinate implementation of the networking and to improve primary health care delivery components of the *Action Plan for Official Languages*, in partnership with the provinces and territories.
- Since in December 2002, *Société Santé en français* has supported community networking in all the minority Francophone communities. Today, the seventeen networks are a model for co-operation among health partners. They are also a model of French service adaptation to the demographic and geographic diversity of the communities in which they find themselves, and to the differences in health system organization across those provinces and territories where French-speaking populations are in the minority.
- There is a network in every province and territory, with the exception of Ontario. In Ontario, the size of the Francophone population and the province itself led to the creation of four regional networks. In New Brunswick, three networks were organized based on community action, training and research and organization of services.
- All the networks are in the process of establishing collaborative relationships with provincial and territorial ministries and departments, as well as with regional health boards.
- For example, the Prince Edward Island French Language Health Services Network is a partnership between the province's Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Acadian community. The network has two co-chairs: one representing government and the other represents the community. The provincial government is responsible for part of the ongoing functions by providing advice and assistance to ensure direction that is consistent with the objectives of provincial health system.
- In Manitoba, a formal agreement with the provincial government recognizes the network - the *Conseil communauté en santé* - as the government's intermediary with respect to health care services in French. The community network also coordinates provincial funding that supports the organization of health care services in French.
- The Ontario networks have grouped together at the provincial level within the *Alliance des réseaux ontariens de santé en français*. The Ontario Government implemented a formal consultation mechanism to seek the group's input during restructuring of the health system, to ensure adequate representation of the Franco-Ontarian community.





*Moving Forward in the health Sector... Consultative Committees for English- and French-Speaking Minority Communities Moving Forward in the health Sector... Consultative Committees for English- and French-Speaking Minority Communities de l'avenir du secteur de santé*

“ Second-language training for health service providers ... recruitment and retention of English-speaking personnel in the regions ... training more French-speaking health care providers and creating training partnerships. ”





## **Training and Retention of Health Professionals**

**- \$12 million (Anglophones) and \$63 million  
(Francophones) over five years**

The commitment made in the *Action Plan for Official Languages* was reiterated at the First Ministers' Meeting in September 2004, and the final communiqué confirms the Government of Canada's commitment to support official language minority communities by increasing the number of health professionals in these communities. The projects are to focus on four complementary areas for action:

- Recruitment and retention of English-speaking health personnel in Quebec focuses on developing incentives targeting English-speaking personnel in Quebec; for French-speaking personnel outside Quebec, it focuses on recruitment and promotion of students for French-language health care programs.
- Training is the main focus, and is supported and reinforced by the other areas of action. In Quebec, this initiative provides support for second-language training (English or French).
- For French-speaking minority communities, training includes an increase in students in existing health care programs, development of new programs, development of partnerships between post-secondary institutions and continuing education to train French-language health care professionals.
- Research, at the very heart of future post-secondary education, is also integrated into the projects.
- Coordination, which includes increasing inter-institutional competencies and combining human, educational and technical resources, will help increase access to health services and create new programs.

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# Achievements

## Anglophone minority communities

- McGill University is working with regional health and social services planning authorities, service providers and communities across Quebec to identify training needs. By 2007-08, a language-training program will reach some 4,000 Francophone and Anglophone health and social services personnel so they are better able to meet the needs of clientele in all 16 regions. The first programs will be delivered in 2005-06.
- McGill University is developing measures in partnership with regional planning authorities, educational institutions, English-speaking communities and institutional employers to encourage students who leave the regions to get professional training in English to return to their home regions to work. Distant support for professionals and other communities is an important feature of the project, which is why McGill University Health Centre's Telehealth Program will play a major role.
- The Consultative Committee for English-Speaking Minority Communities is promoting initiatives to bring together research communities, research funding bodies and English-speaking communities into new partnerships. For example:
  - a) A joint advisory committee to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has been established which includes the English- and French-speaking minority communities.
  - b) McGill University and Quebec's Community Health and Social Services Network created a partnership to perform thematic research on health in English-speaking communities.

## Francophone minority communities - *Consortium national de formation en santé*

### Recruitment

- For the first two years of the Training and Research Project, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, the number of student enrolments in health programs rose by 1,014, with an expected result of 2,500 in five years.
- As of June 2004, this training project already included 100 college and 40 university graduates, with an expected result of 1,250 graduates in five years.

### Training

- More than 28 French-language health programs are offered at the university level, and 24 at the collegiate level, in the 10 member institutions of the *Consortium national de formation en santé*.

santé. These programs are located throughout the country, providing increased access to students who want to continue their health care education in French.

- Partnerships were set up between member institutions of the *Consortium national de formation en santé* and health care institutions to develop health care curricula and clinical training, specifically with *La Cité collégiale* and *Éducacentre* in British Columbia, the University of Ottawa and the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, *Université Sainte-Anne* and *La Cité collégiale*, as well as *Université de Moncton* and New Brunswick Community College - Campbellton.
- A number of partnerships were developed with health institutions for clinical training, for example: *Collège communautaire de Campbellton* (NBCC Campbellton) and the Campbellton Regional Hospital; the University of Ottawa and the Montfort Hospital. In addition, *La Cité collégiale* coordinates long-term care clinical training with health organizations in Victoria, Vancouver and Whitehorse, and *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface* with the St. Boniface General Hospital.
- A key element in health training is clinical internships. In order to increase the number of preceptors of French-speaking clinical internships, clinical preceptor training workshops on the Art of Supervising Interns were developed by the University of Ottawa to meet the professional development needs of French-speaking health professionals. These workshops are offered online and in person in various regions. More than 250 professionals have already taken this training.

### Research

- A *Commission conjointe sur la recherche et les systèmes d'information* was created in October 2003. The joint commission is under the *Consortium national de formation en santé* and works in

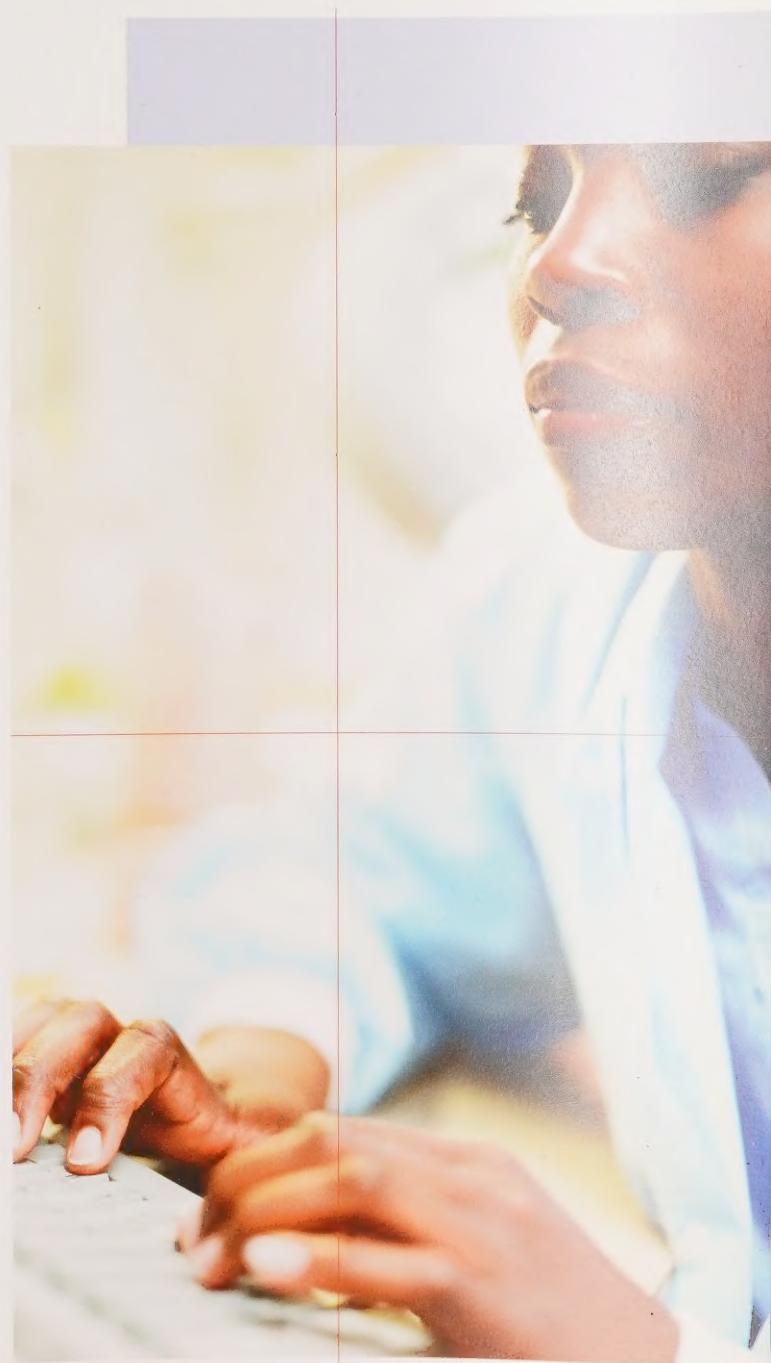
partnership with *Société Santé en français*. Its mandate is to promote knowledge of needs and possibilities, develop and propose direction and measures to support research and identify opportunities for cooperation between stakeholders.

- A national research forum on the health of Francophone minority communities took place in the Fall 2004 to discuss social determinants of health, French-language health services governance, and links between language, culture and health. The forum brought together 175 researchers from universities, representatives from various levels of government, as well as various actors from the health care field and the community.
- A Consultative Committee for Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) was created at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Its mandate will be to provide CIHR with informed, strategic advice regarding the health research program for OLMCs and to prepare an action plan for developing capacity for competitive research.

### **Primary Health Care Service Delivery – \$10 million (Anglophones) and \$20 million (Francophones) over three years**

- Improving primary health care services rests on the collection of relevant data, the use of technology and the development of new methods of service delivery. The objective is to create spaces, physical or virtual, where members of official language communities will be comfortable requesting health services in their own language.
- There are currently more than 50 projects being carried out in nine provinces across Canada for Francophone minority communities. Projects within the territories are being developed. These projects can be divided into four main categories,

such as (1) assistance in accessing the health system for problems such as cancer, drug addiction or cardiovascular conditions through a single service window, the Info-Santé help line; (2) identification of available resources, both for the public and for health system workers, through means such as directories of health professionals/health guide; (3) integrated service delivery by developing community health centres with multidisciplinary teams; and, 4) measures aimed at promoting health and preventing illness and accidents.



# Collecting data ... using new technology ... developing new service delivery models.

## Achievements

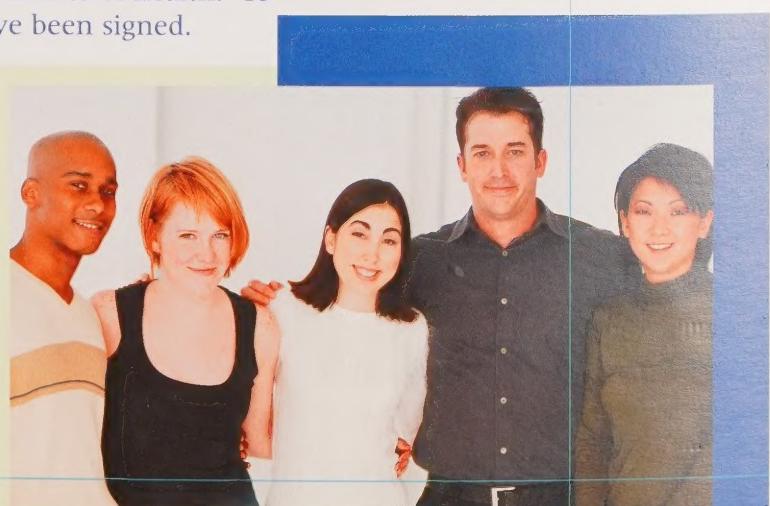
### Anglophone minority communities

- By March 2006, Quebec's Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), in partnership with Quebec's health and social services system, will implement three broad measures to improve access to primary health care for English-speaking communities.
- CHSSN launched a call for innovative projects to reorganize services and enhance the capacity of human resources to meet primary care needs for Quebec's dispersed English-speaking communities.
- CHSSN approved 30 projects submitted by public institutions which will involve local English-speaking minority communities. Four projects will address long-term care needs of Anglophone Quebecers, and 26 others will improve front-line health and social services. An amount of \$4.8 million will support these initiatives in 13 of Quebec's 16 administrative health regions.
- In partnership with the *Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux*, CHSSN has invested \$3 million for seven projects involving a major reorganization of Quebec's Info-Santé help-line. Human resources training, information campaigns and use of new telecommunications technology will ensure that help-line resources are available in English in all regions of Quebec.

### Francophone minority communities

- The calls for submission of proposals issued by *Société Santé en français* to organize French-language health services elicited close to 85 letters of intent from all regions of the country, including 65 completed proposals which were also supported by the relevant provincial or territorial ministries of health. To date, fifty-six contribution agreements have been signed.
- All provinces and territories confirmed their support to collaborate on the planning project dealing with French-language primary health care services entitled *Préparer le terrain*. At the end of the project, in 2006, each provincial and territorial health department will have an action plan to improve French-language health services in its province or territory, as developed in cooperation with relevant partners.

- There are currently more than 50 projects being carried out in nine provinces across Canada for Francophone minority communities. Projects within the territories are being developed.
- A health guide has been distributed to enable the public to recognize and deal with close to 200 common health problems. This is a multijurisdictional project led by British Columbia. (British Columbia and Yukon)
- A 24-hour, central access point for Francophone interpretation services and a provincial directory of Francophone health professionals are being set up. (British Columbia)
- An inventory of health education materials in French will be available on the Internet. (British Columbia)
- A central coordination point has been set up to improve access to health care services in French and to implement among others, workshops and self-help groups, primarily for children and seniors. (Saskatchewan)



- A travelling team of health professionals is being set up to better serve Francophone populations and three community health centres have been established. (Manitoba)
- The Francophone component of the provincial health information line has been put in place and now enables the Francophone public to obtain health-related information and advice. (Manitoba)
- A community health centre will be established in Edmonton. Its mandate will consist of creating programs and providing access to health services for the French-speaking population of the region served by the Alberta's Capital Health Region. It will develop an integrated primary care network for seniors. The centre, which will be associated with the *Faculté Saint-Jean* of the University of Alberta, will provide a training environment for primary health care providers and students.
- *Médicentre St-Jean* in New Brunswick will be a point of access to health services in a Francophone school-community centre that already offers school, cultural and community services. It will facilitate access to health promotion services offered at the St. Joseph's Community Health Centre and will be a health resources centre.
- The Nova Scotia French Language Health Services Network and the province's Department of Health will be developing an inventory of primary care services provided in French in Nova Scotia. The data in this inventory will be integrated into the existing systems designed to inform the French-speaking community and will improve access to services in French.

## Progressive implementation

- Implementation of the initiatives is based on the cooperation of all partners. Although often described as the way to go to ensure renewal of our health systems, cooperation has its challenges. In each component, the stakeholders involved have been working to create solid partnerships based on confidence in and respect for the jurisdiction of each stakeholder.
- Although the administrative requirements may have presented challenges, we can see at mid-term an increased awareness in communities and mobilization of partners. The networks that have been created have obtained recognition as credible stakeholders and have been a bridge between the needs of communities and of the health systems. They have also demonstrated their ability to serve as catalysts.
- The initiatives that were launched will soon bear fruit. They demonstrate the fairness of the approach that was adopted. Whether they be students enrolling in programs that may last several years, provincial and territorials ministers who have agreed to develop health service development plans, or health service institutions or agencies that have begun to create services, the partners involved need to know that the resources will be long-term.
- At this time, it is also important to reconfirm two components that were temporarily set aside, i.e. the use of new technology and strategic information. The consultative committees recognized the importance of new technology for delivery of health services in remote and rural communities and the key role of probative information in making informed decisions.
- Major progress has been achieved within a short time frame, mainly as a result of a close collaboration among all stakeholders in the health sector. There is still a lot of work to be done. All stakeholders continue to work together on initiatives focussed on offering quality health and social services for Anglophone Quebecers and Francophone Canadians in the provinces and territories. In order to continue with this momentum, the initiatives that have been started must be strengthened, the work of the networks must be encouraged on a permanent basis and ongoing financial resources are necessary to implement and maintain quality health and social services.